GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1363
ANSWERED ON:10.12.2003
THALASSEMICS
M. JAGANNATH

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of thalassaemics in the country;

(b) the number of said people born in the country every year;

(c) whether ninety per cent thalassaemia carriers are below 20 years of age in the country;

(d) if so, whether it is a fact that several thalassaemics are struggling for life due to non-availability of blood for transfusion; and

(e) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA)

(a) and (b) There is no centralized registry or mechanism to collect the information on prevalence of thalassaemia cases in the country. As per the estimates of the Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi, it is estimated that 10,000 thalassaemic children are born every year in our country.

(c) The Thalassaemia major is mainly prevalent in children below twenty years of age and these children survive only one or two decades. Since Thalassaemia is a genetic disease, thalassaemia carrier cases survive full life carrying the defective gene responsible for the disease.

(d) and (e) The mainstay of treatment of thalassaemia is blood transfusion. Sufficient blood is available in blood banks of various hospitals for this purpose. Thalassaemics struggle because of the complications resulting from the iron overload caused by the repeated blood transfusion and not due to the non-availability of blood.

There could be seasonal and occasional shortage of blood in a few blood banks. For generating enough blood through Voluntary Blood Donation Programme, the Government has taken a number of steps such as media campaigns through television, All India Radio, and News Papers, developing Information Education and Communication material for one to one communication, observation of National Voluntary Blood Donation Day on 1st October every year, encouraging rational use of blood among clinicians and the launching of special campaign to educate masses to support Voluntary Blood Donation.